



# LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION: BE PREPARED**

While California has prepared for natural disasters, more needs to be done to prepare communities for the new and uncertain dangers of terrorism, the Little Hoover Commission concluded in a report released Thursday.

The Commission determined that the State had a solid infrastructure for dealing with emergencies, and reviewed many of the measures taken to fortify California after the September attacks.

The Commission's report identifies measures that could be taken over the long term to assess dangers, wisely allocate resources and ensure communities are prepared for what is now possible.

"If we learn one lesson from these events, it should be that local communities and state agencies need to dedicate some of their best minds to continuously improving our collective ability to respond to these increasing and diverse dangers," the Commission concluded.

The Commission's public hearings focused on ways to bolster California's abilities to respond to disasters. From its experience with earthquakes, floods and fires, the State has forged a cooperative system for sharing resources and coordinating responses.

Local officials, however, told the Commission that not all communities had the equipment or training necessary to deal with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. A series of ongoing attacks could undermine the willingness of local agencies to share resources. Large and simultaneous attacks would challenge the system for coordinating responses. And even a single disaster could overwhelm medical facilities that no longer have extra capacity.

While many improvements are underway, the Commission urged state policy-makers to institutionalize today's sense of urgency into policies that would rigorously challenge local and state agencies to assess and improve their ability to respond to emergencies of all kinds.

The Commission made recommendations in four areas:

- ❑ ***Local Preparedness.*** Disasters are largely local and so each community must be prepared for the possibilities. While the State requires local emergency agencies to standardize parts of their operations, local communities are not required to meet a baseline level of readiness. Rigorous and routine assessments and drills would improve the preparedness of local agencies and identify where additional resources are required.
- ❑ ***State Support.*** The State needs to further fortify its emergency response infrastructure to ensure that it is collecting and communicating essential information. It needs better tools for setting priorities and for guiding additional investments. Health officials need to be better integrated into emergency preparations. And the State needs to ensure that security concerns can be met without sacrificing effective public oversight.
- ❑ ***Public Health.*** One of the weakest parts of the response network in California, as in the rest of the nation, is the public health system. While some improvements are underway, more fundamental reforms are required to ensure communities can detect and assess hazards and respond to biological and chemical weapons.
- ❑ ***Public Information.*** Far more than during discrete natural disasters, the people of California need more and better information regarding terrorist attacks. The information is essential to allow Californians to prepare and protect themselves.

"More than anything else, the Commission concluded that the state and local communities need to think differently about emergency preparedness because the range of possibilities is much greater than it was before," said Chairman Michael Alpert.

"We may not be able to afford every improvement immediately," Alpert said. "But with careful planning, we can make essential improvements over time to make sure that emergency response units can do their job and Californians can do their part to protect themselves and assist their communities."

The Commission is an independent and bipartisan panel that reviews state policies and programs for efficiency and effectiveness. Its recommendations are submitted to the Governor and the Legislature for their consideration. Copies of the report can be obtained by contacting the Commission or visiting its Web site: [www.lhc.ca.gov](http://www.lhc.ca.gov).